Intermediate Ceramics
ARTS 3324.001
TR 6.30-9.20

Semester Information:
· Office Hours: TR 4.00-6.30 pm
· Final Exam: See University Exam Schedule

Stable Information and Teacher Information:
· Name of Instructor: Kevin Ramler
· Office phone number: 361-825-5987
· E-mail address: kramler@islander.tamucc.edu
· Office number and building: CA112B
· This syllabus is subject to change.

Course description: This course is an introduction wheel thrown ceramics. It is designed to teach you, or allow you to learn, to throw, and to throw a variety of forms that conform to a dogma of "good" form. It is not the instructor’s belief that these dogmatic criteria for what truly is good or beautiful are effective, but conforming to certain criteria will bring about pots that are functional, teaches the new potter to get accepting of what is easy, train the eye, and train the hand. In short this course takes the philosophy that good art can be built on skill and training. The course will further your understanding of glazes through lectures and testing and will expose you to historical and contemporary functional pottery.

Stoneware clay and slips will be used. Most work will be glazed and fired to cone10 in reduction or soda. Students will prepare clay and will mix clay as needed during the semester. Students will use the gram scales and will learn to prepare glazes. Students will learn to unload and load bisque and glaze kilns.

Student Learning Outcomes:
1. Competence in basic throwing techniques, skills and forms, to increase surface application skills and develop a palette of glazes and/or slips.
2. Increased surface application skills and to develop a palette of glazes and/or slips.
3. Increased competency in loading of kilns and more understanding of firing.
4. Additional awareness of historical and contemporary functional ceramic art.
5. Exposure to glaze materials, theory and glaze testing

Graded activity: All assignments should have your initials incised or stamped into the clay. Bats holding your pots may also be marked with slip.
Read Syllabus and class materials completely. Read the appropriate parts of the Lab Handbook. You might be tested on the safety material contained in the pages "Basic Safety Material, and Safety Agreement"
· All ceramics students **must** be a member of the Ceramics Listserv and read their email M-F. Email may be checked in CA 201. Students should send an email to Louis.Katz@tamucc.edu with "Join Ceramics" in the subject line. Please include your real name and not just your email account name. Students not having an email account can get one on campus. When you join you will be given a link to our list archives. They may be of interest.

· All art students **should** belong to the Art Listerv. You may join by sending your name to Louis with "Join Art" in the subject line. The listserv has departmental information and announces shows and other art community events. It is also a place for discussions of art issues.

· Make 15 glaze test tiles the first week of class. Make the tiles 2"x6 inches and bend them per instructions. Put a line of black slip across the front of the tile and a pencil hole through the top for hanging on a nail. But your initials on the bottom and inscribe the numbers 1-15 on the tiles. Get together with your fellow students and get them fired. Ask for help if necessary.

**Stamp**

· All Intermediate students will make a stamp to mark their work. The stamp should be bisqued. It should be smaller than 1/4" x 1/2". Do not glaze fire the stamp.

**Assignment One**

Throw ten cylinders at least six inches tall. They must have relatively even walls and a flat floor. Make prints of these and get them checked off. This assignment is strictly a completion grade. Remember that the ability to throw a good cylinder is determined by looking at the entire body of work at the end of the semester. Finishing this assignment is required before moving on to Assignment two.

**Assignment Two: Tumblers**

· Fifteen cylinders at least six inches tall. These can be made in any style but must be functional. They also need to be done as a set. Now since we are making fifteen, they don’t all have to be done as one set. You can make two or three sets.

· The cylinders should have walls with even thickness of 1/8 - 1/4 inch thick. Thinner is acceptable but evenly thick walls is an important goal. The pots **may not be trimmed**. Weigh your clay and keep your ball size constant. Work to get the floor the same thickness as the wall. Learn to use the wooden cutoff tool to produce a neat bottom edge.

· The bottom edge should be smoothed when the pot is leather hard. The center of the bottom should be tapped to cause it to curve up slightly.

· If you slide your pots onto a board, make sure it is a clean unfinished (no paint) wooden board and not a plastic bat. The wood will draw water from the bottom of the pot and dry it. After the pot has sat on the board a short (1 hour) while come back with your wire and recut but do not attempt to cut it off with a wire again after it has sat on the bat for more than three (?) hours. The wire will rise up and may slice through the floor.

· Rims. You are learning to make "good pots". **Rims are perhaps the most important part of a pot after form, maybe even more important than form.** A good rim serves the function of the pot. In pouring pots such as pitchers and teapots the lip that is poured over may have a sharp edge to prevent drips, but this makes the lip prone to chipping. In all other forms including cups the rim
should be rounded. You probably do not want a rim that will cut your lips. Use a balloon or chamois on the rim and make it round and a pleasure to put against your lips. Often anemic rims can be saved by good use of a chamois, but learn to leave a little meat at the top of your walls to make the rim from.

**Your learning objectives** in this assignment (and most of all the other assignments) are to begin thinking about the process of making the same form a number of times. This is done to train your hands to do your bidding and not the clay’s. It will also train your eye to start picking up the subtle differences between each like form. It helps to edit pots that don’t meet your criterion also. Remember not all pots thrown will be fired.

**Assignment Three: Cups with handles**
- Fifteen drinking vessels with pulled handles. This means make many more and keep the best. These will be done in three sets.
- The vessels should have walls with even thickness 1/8 - 1/4 inch thick. Thinner is acceptable but evenly thick walls is an important goal. The pots **may not be trimmed**. Weigh your clay and keep your ball size constant. Work to get the floor the same thickness as the wall. Learn to use the wooden cutoff tool to produce a neat bottom edge.
- Dry the pots just to the stage where handles can be pulled on them without distorting them. The wetness is critical. Too dry and the handle may crack at the upper attachment, to soft and the pot will distort.
- The handles should be pulled with soft aged clay. If the clay is only 2 days old, don't bother. You can always use slop dried on a board or bat. Wedge it well. Roll your carrot on dampened canvas or on Formica. If the surface of the carrot is dry the handle will crack when it is bent. Score and slip the pot with rather thick slip. Do not slip the carrot. This is one of the purposes of using wet clay. Make sure you roll the carrot onto the pot to expel air. Before you begin to pull have a tad of slip on your serrated rib for attaching the bottom of the handle after pulling.
- The dogmatic "good handle" has an attachment that looks like a branch leaving the trunk of a tree. There is a much thicker attachment than the cross section of the handle. The bottom attachment is more flexible. It can look like the top or be thinner. Only bend the handle once. If you bend it twice or try to correct the curve it will loose the freshness of its spring. Practice making handles before you try them on your good cups.
- The bottom edge should be smoothed when the pot is leather hard. The center of the bottom should be tapped to cause it to curve up slightly.
- **Learning objectives** in this assignment is to further the understanding from assignment one and to learn the aesthetics of handles in relationship to a pot.

**Tips**
- You can practice handles on bricks, cans, or some other non-cup that you are not going to keep. It is much easier when the stress is lower. When you can do three in a row without screwing it up, start with your worst cup. Start practicing pulling handles early.

**Assignment Four: Teabowls**
- Throw twenty teabowls and trim feet on them. Sets are not required in this assignment, but if you find a form you enjoy see if you can repeat it. Ample clay must be left on the bottom for trimming
(at least 3/4 of an inch, if your pots are wobbly, more). These pots should be dried to trimming stage slowly (at least 3 days). If the pots have dried quickly (less than two full days), they should be placed tightly under plastic and allowed to become evenly hard. **You may NEVER trim bone-dry pots** for use in this class; they must be trimmed before they are bone dry. It makes too much dust. **Pots trimmed bone dry will not count towards a grade in this class.**

- Feet should be trimmed so that the outside of the form conforms to the inside with even walls. The foot-ring should be out far enough to give the pot a steady stance, and should be tall enough that there is at least 3/16's of inch clearance between the body of the pot and the table.
- Experiment with types of forms, surfaces, rims and feet. These, your first twenty teabowls, if they look like twenty different people made them it are ok.
- Teabowls are a standard form in the United States for loosening up you’re throwing and starting out a new body of work or when in school a new semester. They need not take more than a few minutes each to throw.

**Tips**

- Make sure your pots are the right hardness to trim. Do not dry them too quick. If the outside is stiff and you trim into soft clay you have dried them too fast. It will take at least four days to dry pots well to trim them.
- This assignment does not require great skill in throwing but it does require that you learn to trim. Leave enough clay at the bottom of the pot to trim good feet.
- Practice trimming early. See the exercise below. If you are having trouble, make sure the pot is centered before trimming and keep the wheel speed up around what you would use for opening.

**Assignment Five: bowls**

Throw fifteen round bottom bowls and trim feet on them. Successful bowls will have continuous curves, well trimmed feet and considered rims. They will have even walls and well-sized and detailed feet.

**Tips**

- Learn the sequence required to get a smooth inside curve with little hump or slump.
- Concentrate on the curve of the floor.
- Trimming is easier when the curve is smooth.
- Aged clay really helps with bowls.

**Assignment Six: Lidded Jars**

Make a series of ten jars with flanges on the pots. Be as precise as you can when throwing so that the lid fits the pot snug. Learn to make a gallery for the lid with a good profile.

**Assignment Seven: Teapot**

Make three teapots. All attachments should be thrown excluding the handle. The teapots should hold at least two cups of liquid. Maybe think about the teabowls from assignment four and make a set.

**Assignment Eight: 3 extra projects**

Three extra projects that can be anything you chose but has to be OKed by me. Let me know what you want to do early so you can get help if needed.
Technical Lectures Attend during-class technical lectures. Take notes.

Glaze Tests
- Make a line blend between two glazes with another classmate.
- Make test tiles using the square extruder die. Make them two inches long. Cut a 1/4-inch hole in one end so they can be hung on a nail. Inscribe your initials into them. Get them fired immediately.
- Weigh out 1000 grams exactly of a glaze recipe. If you cannot or don't want to do this with a classmate, mix up two.
- Discuss your choices with your instructor. The most interesting glazes to line blend are different in surface, ingredients and colors.
- Mix the glazes a bit on the thick side, but still liquid.
- Sieve both glazes being careful to recover most of the cleanings from the sieve.
- Water down one of the glazes so that they are both the same volume.
1. Glaze a test tile with glaze B mark it 0
2. Glaze a tile with 1 Tablespoon (T) glaze A and 5T Glaze B mark it 1
3. Glaze a tile with 3T(T) glaze A and 3T Glaze B mark it 3
4. Glaze a tile with 4T(T) glaze A and 2T Glaze B mark it 4
5. Glaze a tile with 5T(T) glaze A and 1T Glaze B mark it 5
6. Glaze a tile with glaze A mark it 6
- When the tests are fired annotate the first and last tile with the glaze name.
- When these are done ask Louis about follow-up tests.
- Fill out a line blend test form copied from the Ceramics Handbook. Get a clear copy to Louis and keep one yourself.

BREAKAGE, LOSS, FIRING ACCIDENTS Ceramics is fragile, firing is difficult and full of unknowns, especially in a group situation. It is inevitable that some pieces will be lost, broken, or misfired. While losses are regrettable they will happen. The faculty and TAMU-CC cannot be held liable for such accidents. Students should handle work carefully and as little as possible. All work must be marked with a student's initials or stamp.
- LOCKERS: See the Art Office (CA107) to reserve a locker in the hallway. You will need one. The sooner you get one the closer it will be to the studio. If you wait there might not be one available.
- STUDIO HOURS:
  o You may use the Ceramics Lab any time when the building is open except during class time for the other sections of Ceramics or during floor cleaning.
  o The class will involve work in the studio outside of class time.
  o The building is open many nights and weekends. Check on the front door, or with the building supervisor for details. It may be closed Thanksgiving weekend and Labor Day weekend and MLK day.
- CALENDAR: Ceramics is a time sensitive medium. Allowing projects to dry slow and even makes work less prone to cracking and easier to manipulate. Consequently work completed late in the semester will have a greater chance of cracking in the drying process. It is often possible to finish a piece in a small fraction of the time it would take to do it in one week if you spread the work out.
Approximately two weeks before final exams will be the end of the time when wet clay can be used. This date is not fixed until a month before the end of the semester. If most of the work in the studio is already bisqued a few more days of wet work can be added. If little has been bisqued a few more days for firing will be needed and there will be less time for wet work. Even with this two week lead, objects made the last few days for wet work will need to be small if they are to survive the fast drying necessary. Roughly one week before finals will be the last time pots can be glazed. This will occur during dead week. The exact date for the last day for wet work is determined by the amount of work in the studio still needing to fire at the end of the semester. Occasionally there is too much work to fire in the last week. If the work was glazed before the last day to glaze and it was on the racks to be fired before the last day for them to be placed there it will be graded as if it was glaze fired. Work still needing firing may be brought back into ceramics at the beginning of the next long semester for firing. It may not be left in the studio between semesters. Work left in the studio between semesters will be thrown away.

**Required statements:**

*Notice to Students with Disabilities:* Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, located in CCH (Corpus Christi Hall) 116, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

**ACADEMIC ADVISING:** The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College's Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

**GRADE APPEALS PROCESS:** Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, clatamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.